

I've turned into a huge Formula One racing fan this year. A friend of mine knows everything about it, and slowly, I've come to appreciate it immensely. There is so much to love about it from a fan's perspective and also from a free market perspective. Here are some reasons why: Unlike...

I've turned into a huge [Formula One](#) racing fan this year. A friend of mine knows everything about it, and slowly, I've come to appreciate it immensely. There is so much to love about it from a fan's perspective and also from a free market perspective. Here are some reasons why:

- Unlike Nascar, there are only 22 drivers in Formula One. The competition is personal and intense.

- Unlike Nascar, the races are all over the world, from Malaysia to Turkey and from China to Monaco. And the tracks don't limit the driver to just left turns like in Nascar. Formula One race tracks are more crooked than Forrest Gump's spine when he was a kid. And some of the tracks are closed city streets like in Monaco.

- A Formula One car is the highest performing race car in the world. It's hard to truly appreciate the speed of a F1 car without seeing one in person (which I haven't), but watching them race on TV gives you a pretty good idea. Here's [a good example](#).

- The drivers are amazing athletes. They have to endure huge G-forces throughout a race because their cars speed up and slow down at brutally quick rates. And they must do this over a two hour period so their mental tenacity must be superb (Drivers usually retire in their early 30s).

- The cost of racing is ridiculously high. You can't just build yourself a car, get some endorsements, and expect to be competitive. Drivers are supported by teams that are usually car companies. The #1 driver in the world right now is Lewis Hamilton who drives for the McLaren-Mercedes team. *F1 Racing* magazine said McLaren spent \$402 million in one year. That's almost 3.5 times the size of the NFL salary cap. And that's just one car!

- The cutting edge of innovation begins with Formula One cars. Those new discoveries make their way into regular cars as car companies learn more. It's an extremely pure and

exciting form of the free market.

The 2008 Formula One season began in March at the Australian Grand Prix. And it ends in late October in Brazil. Last week featured a race in the Ardennes Forest in Spa, Belgium. The last three laps of the race were thrilling. Hamilton was gaining ground on race leader Kimi Räikkönen just as it was beginning to rain. They battled it out for a while, were hydroplaning, and were mixing it up with other drivers. In the end, Räikkönen crashed into the wall and Hamilton won the race. But wait! Afterwards, race officials penalized Hamilton for cutting a corner, so the second-place finisher, Felipe Massa, inherited the top prize. While I'm not aware of any online videos that capture the last part of the race, you can click [here](#) and then click on the "Belgium" video to watch a summary.

Rep. John Campbell, a pro-growth rock star in the U.S. House, is a big F1 fan. I sent him an email asking him about the race. He wrote back, "I think the FIA [the governing body] made the correct call. Raikkonen had position on Hamilton in that turn and Hamilton cut the chicane rather than braking or crashing. He got the lead basically by shortening the race course when he was out maneuvered. Had there been a wall instead of a chicane, he would not have had that option and would either brake or crash them both and either way he probably would not have won the race."

When I asked him about the free market nature of Formula One, Campbell wrote, "I am a racing fan in general. But I like Formula One because it is the pinnacle of vehicle design and advancement. Rather than having everyone essentially race the same cars, Formula One allows the teams to innovate to gain advantage on one another. That is the way the real world works (or should work). And the public benefits from the discoveries made as a result of the opportunity to innovate, just as the public gains when free markets allow new products or services to be developed or delivered at lower cost."

Couldn't have said it better. And nothing I could add truly does the sport justice, but if I've captured your enthusiasm, watch this weekend's race in Italy. The track design is a bit boring, but I think you'll appreciate the sport nonetheless. You can watch it typically on the [Speed Channel](#) if it's available in your area.